

DRAFT

TRIBOARD

Meeting Minutes

February 3, 2015

ATTENDANCE: The meeting was convened at 7:38 pm by First Selectman Gayle Weinstein in the Middle School Library with members from the Boards of Selectmen, Finance, and Education in attendance. Selectman Tracey was present. Board of Education members Harvey, Major, Daniel, Schaefer, Uzenoff, and Spaulding were present. Board of Finance members Ezzes, Bochinski, Carter, Grauberd, Finkel, and Koller were present. Town Administrator Landry, Finance Director Darling, Superintendent Palmer, Business Manager Keating, Facilities Supervisor Olenik, and Assistant Superintendent Craw were also in attendance.

DEMOGRAPHIC DATA/ SUPPLEMENTAL APPROPRIATION: First Selectman Weinstein made a slide presentation regarding several economic and social indicators comparing the Town to others in Fairfield County and across the State. Population trends, school enrollments, property tax burdens and other categories were noted. She reviewed a proposal from Dr. Floyd Lapp (attached), recognized Dr. Tom Failla for his work to date, and also recognized Chris Spaulding who will help her coordinate this effort going forward.

Comments offered during a far ranging, two hour, discussion included: Mr. Schaefer questioned whether the presented home values were assessed or market values; Ms. Koller asked if the average square footage for each community could be provided; Mr. Carter asked why the trends affected Weston so deeply compared to the others (depends- we are generally doing better than the smaller towns, but not the larger ones); He asked if we market the Town, which generated a fair amount of discussion; Mr. Schaefer said the BOE does market the intimate feel and single campus set up of the school system with realtors; Ms. Koller asked what we might market besides the school system; Mr. Finkel cautioned that great changes to the nature of the community were not advisable. He felt the quality of the community was not an issue, but that marketing ourselves would be helpful; Mr. Tracey said that our proximity cannot change, our transportation network won't change, but that our property tax burden is an issue and we need to explore ways to address it; Mr. Grauberd said we should not preordain the results, we need to let the consultant do his work.

Mr. Bochinski said the community has experienced wide ranging trends previously, and they are not permanent. He said there was discussion of not having our own high school due to small student numbers in the seventies, but twenty five years later we are doubling its size due to enrollment pressures. Mr. Grauberd noted that the proposal suggested reviewing commercial development options only on publicly owned land, but that is too narrow a focus. Ms. Daniels said she has seen similar development pressures in Westchester and Fairfax counties, and they did not achieve affordability.

Resident Dan McNeil said he was cautious of making fundamental changes to the community. He said that better communicating our offerings (marketing), rather than changing our offerings was the issue. Sarah Schlechter opined that the effort does not require a planning or zoning background, but rather a marketing initiative. Neil Horner said the problem we are trying to fix has not been well articulated here, although he gathers that we think we are having a problem attracting a sufficient number of new residents to Weston. He thinks we need to better define the problem. Dr. Lapp said that having further discussion after the first phase of his proposal is completed, will help the group to better focus its efforts.

After the discussion, Selectman Tracey moved (Weinstein second) that the First Selectman be authorized to engage the consultant to address the issues discussed, not to exceed a cost of \$18,000 (provided as a supplemental appropriation from the general fund balance), with the intent of helping Town officials understand the options we have to relieve the mill rate burden and improve the attractiveness of the community to potential new residents. The two Selectmen voted to support the motion.

The Board of Finance members then discussed the motion. Mr. Carter said he would like to review the proposal again, as he thought the purpose of the effort was still murky and needed to be refined. While the group generally thought this to be accurate, Ms. Weinstein said that part of the purpose of the review was to do just that, and we needed the benefit of the study to better define our issues, and how we might properly respond to them. Mr. Lapp said that phase one of his proposal was essential to this effort. He reiterated his preference for an incremental approach to the study. He suggested that he could complete the phase one work of the study, and present the findings in mid to late March. At that point, the group could determine how best to proceed. Mr. Grauberd asked what the cost of that portion of work would be (\$10,750), then made a motion (Mr. Bochinski second) to amend the amount in Mr. Tracey's motion down to that number. This amendment passed by a vote of 5-1 (Mr. Finkel voting against). The vote on the motion as amended passed the Board of Finance (same movers, same vote), and both Selectmen supported the amended motion.

SCHOOL and TOWN FACILITIES: Dr. Palmer presented an analysis of District enrollment projections and space needs (17 pages, dated January 29, 2015, attached). She said that current enrollment trend necessitates a look at how the District might reduce its facility footprint if the trend continues. She explained in some detail how grades might be relocated in different buildings. The discussion regarding the location of District and Town offices centered on compatibility of use, safety concerns, and the ability to convert the space back to classrooms if necessitated by enrollment growth. Mr. Schaefer said he anticipated there would be "a little" space available for Town use on campus. Further discussion revealed that this was unlikely to total the 4,000 square feet of space necessary to house the Town's Land Use function, but a variety of options were discussed, and additional information requested, before a final decision could be made.

Mr. Bochinski and Mr. Finkel left the meeting at this time.

EXECUTIVE SESSION: At 10:58 pm, a motion (Ms. Weinstein, Mr. Tracey second) to enter executive session for the purpose of discussing campus security measures passed by unanimous vote. Ms. Weinstein announced that the group would return to open session, but did not know if further action would be taken. All of the staff and Board members listed as attending the meeting were in attendance at the executive session except for Mr. Finkel and Mr. Bochinski. The group voted unanimously (Mr. Tracey motion, Ms. Weinstein second) to exit executive session at 11:23 pm

ADJOURN: At 11:25 pm, a motion (Ms. Weinstein, Mr. Tracey second) to adjourn the meeting passed by unanimous vote.